

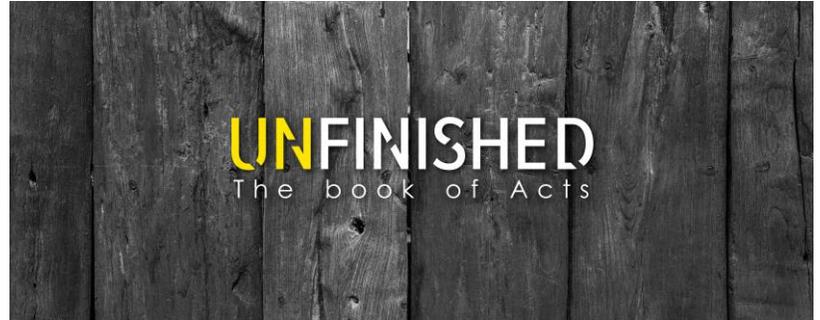


VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Unfinished

Part 10: Heaven's Heroes—Acts 5:12-42
Tim Badal | November 12, 2017



Last week we saw a turn in the life of the early church. The religious leaders were becoming upset by the growing number of people who were coming to believe in Christ and making it their mission to spread the gospel. So the Pharisees and Sadducees started turning up the heat. We also saw some internal troubles in the church, beginning when Ananias and Sapphira lied about their gift to the church and God in His justice gave them the death sentence.

You might think these things would cause the early church to consider giving up. Imagine what it would be like in our service if God caused two of us to die because of our sin. I think there would be a lot of us who would decide not to come back next Sunday. At least we would expect the early church to slow things down because of these troubles—but that's not what they did.

As we'll see in today's text, more people than ever came to Jesus. More miracles and signs and wonders were taking place. We'll begin to see a recurring theme. The gospel was preached, the establishment threatened them and even beat or imprisoned them, yet the disciples refused to stop preaching the name of Jesus. But this herky-jerky relationship between the believers and the religious leaders forced the church to answer a question: "When the going gets tough, how will we respond? Will we give up or will we become even more committed to bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost world?" As we'll see, they chose the latter course. In the face of opposition, they continued to pray for boldness.

We live in a time of relative peace. Sometimes we might get a little static, perhaps from the media, about how bad and bigoted and out of date we are. But most of us go through our days with little or no push-back because of our faith. Still, we have to consider what we'll do if and when that push-back comes to us. Are we ready to deal with it? Do we realize that some push-back will indicate that we're on the right track in serving God's Kingdom and seeing souls saved? Most of us probably aren't looking for this, as opposition will make it harder to serve God. Nevertheless, as we'll see today, God uses the hard things to bring more glory to Himself and bring us to greater maturity. God even enjoys demonstrating His power to show how weak the opposition actually is.

Today's text brought to mind an old TV show I used to watch—"Hogan's Heroes"—that told the story of a group of men who were POWs of the Nazis in World War II. While it might be hard to imagine that setting as the context for a sit-com, they accomplished it masterfully. Even though Hogan and his rag-tag crew of POWs were in a German camp without many liberties, they figured out that from that place they could run all kinds of secret operations, making their captors feel as though they were in charge while they actually weren't.

Today we'll read a story of when the church was imprisoned and the Sadducees believed they were the ones who had power and were calling the shots, when in fact they weren't. The prisoners and the God they served were actually in control. They had just experienced the scandal with Ananias and Sapphira, and if they were like us, you would think they would be inclined to close up shop. Instead we'll see what it is like to be among "Heaven's Heroes." Let's first look at Acts 5:12-16:

¹² Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³ None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴ And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵ so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came

by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶ The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

I remember when Amanda was first diagnosed with cancer. We were reeling from the news, wondering how bad the cancer would be and how it would impact our lives. I remember saying to her, "We need to pull back. We need to slow down and focus on this issue."

But in her great wisdom, Amanda responded, "God brought us to this place for a purpose. He's given us various ministries and tasks to do, fully knowing this was coming. So why would we stop now? We should keep going, believing God will meet us every step of the way." My thought was that if life was going to be hard, we would need to reorder what we did.

The early church agreed with Amanda. They realized that if opposition was coming, they needed to ask God how He was going to make a way for them. Looking back, I'm glad I didn't stop everything. God has shown us that staying the course was the right thing to do, just as He did with the church in Acts. When they hit an obstacle, they chose not to give up. Why not?

Heaven's Heroes have a mission to pursue.

The reason the early believers did not give up was that they were fully aware they had a mission to pursue. God had given His plan to the disciples: "*You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*" (Acts 1:8), and this mission had not yet been completed. Just because there was opposition did not change their assignment. Jesus promised that He would be with them. In fact, He had prophesied specifically that the opposition would come. So consider what they did in this situation and see things we also need to apply in the mission God has given us.

The early church shifted well between the internal and the external.

If we go back and review the last five chapters that Luke wrote in Acts, we will see an alternating pattern. In chapter 1, the church is alone, praying in the upper room and waiting for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They also selected a man to replace Judas. Then in chapter two, we move to the external events of the Day of Pentecost. After the Holy Spirit fell on the believers, they went out into the streets to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Beginning in Acts 2:42, the Christ followers moved back to an internal context, where they devoted themselves to the Apostle's teaching and fellowship, having all things in common. But after we're given a picture of the great blessings of this tightly knit family of believers, Acts 3 tells of Peter and John again going out, this time to the temple where they healed a lame man and preached the gospel. This resulted in their being arrested and taken into custody. They were threatened and told to stop preaching, after which they were released.

By the end of chapter four, they gathered together for a prayer meeting and in chapter five we read of the Ananias and Sapphira event. Again, these are internal church situations they needed to deal with. But beginning in verse 12, they again moved out to the world to continue preaching the gospel.

Next week, when we reach chapter six—what will we see? Yes, it will again be a report of the internal workings of the church involving the church widows.

Why is Luke following this pattern? I believe it's because he's modeling to us what a healthy church looks like. A healthy church does a good job of ministering to the needs and spiritual development of its people. It might be glorious to be a part of a church like that, but if that's all they did, they would miss the reality that God gave them these good things to share. But the church in Acts not only had awesome relationships internally, they also took these blessings out into the streets.

What happens here on Sunday should mobilize us Monday through Saturday. When we experience the love and fellowship we have in Christ, we should be asking whom we might bring to share this experience with us. That's what they did in the early church, as they shifted between the internal and the external. We should follow their example, as we spend some seasons ministering to each other and other seasons going out to bring the good news to those who are lost.

The early church served all kinds of people.

Luke tells us in Acts 5:12 that *“many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people.”* This wasn't a theoretical movement. Even though Jesus preached great truths, His ministry wasn't just academic, where people learned information. He ministered *“among the people,”* impacting them where they were. In the same way, the early church served *“among the people.”*

In our churches and other Christian organizations we too have to be careful not to fall into an “ivory tower” mentality. We need to avoid talking about “those people” as though they're something abstract and not personal. We saw them engage all kinds of people, from the church leaders to the destitute and everybody in between. Notice too that they were reaching out to both men and women. Prior to this, women were not included in church membership, but as we'll see as we go through Acts, women often played a key role in the Christian church.

In my first year of pastoring, I was given two books by two prominent pastors, men that have two of the largest churches in America, both of them explaining how their churches had become so successful. These books held wonderful truths, but one that particularly caught me off guard was that they had worked the demographic of the people they wanted to reach down to a single person.

This person was defined based on their locale, the community around them, and in both books they drew a figure they would simply call their “person.” For example, their person might be an educated, upper middle-class male who was an executive in his field. They would then choose to focus their attention and resources on reaching that kind of person.

This always seemed odd to me, because Jesus reached out to all kinds of people. So while I thought it might be somehow helpful to clarify something like this, I couldn't see why we would limit ourselves in this way. The early church certainly didn't do this; I believe a healthy church will reach out to all kinds of people—men and women, rich and poor, old and young, those who are new to Christianity and those who have walked with Jesus for a long time and know Him well.

The early church sought to save souls.

Verse 14 tells us, *“More than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.”* While the early church could have decided they had grown large enough, they continued to reach out so souls would be saved. Remember, in Acts 1 there were 120 believers. In Acts 2, there were 3,120. By the time we reach Acts 4, the number was now close to 10,000. If they were like we are today, they would have thought they had done really well with outreach and now it was time to enjoy the fellowship.

Some of us can recall our earlier days, thinking, “Twenty years ago I reached a lot of people with the gospel—now it's time to sit back. It's someone else's turn.” But the early church never had this attitude. They continued to reach out to others, more than ever before. They weren't living in yesterday's spiritual headlines. They wanted to make new news every day. Even though 10,000 had been reached, there was still a lost world around them.

We too need never to rest on our past achievements, but must continually ask, “Lord, whom do You want me to reach out to today?” We need to honestly look at our neighborhoods, schools and workplaces, asking God to show us who has been put in our path and needs to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The early church showed God's power.

We read in verse 12 that *“many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles.”* If we read that too quickly, we might miss some important truths. First, these signs and wonders were actually miracles, and they weren't just happening occasionally. No, they were regularly taking place, probably daily. Wow. That was a church that was on the front line for God, and He was able to show His power through them.

What were these signs and wonders? The first miracle, of course, was that people were being saved—the miracle of new birth. We also know from verse 15 that people *“carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.”* These weren't just the people in Jerusalem, but we're told that people from the towns around them also brought their sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits. And it doesn't just say that some were healed—it says all were healed.

We might ask, “If that was happening then, and we are to imitate that kind of ministry, why are those miracles not taking place today? Or are they taking place and we're just not categorizing them properly?” These questions recently created a great debate in our small groups. One of the responses someone offered was because we have technology and modern medicine which are

performing the miracles instead of the hands of the apostles. We need to be careful with that kind of thinking and how we use the word “miracle.” But this isn’t the way the Bible uses that word.

For example, if your football team pulled out a victory yesterday, we might say it was a miracle. That wasn’t a miracle. The team just played the way they should and won the game. Likewise, if I have a mind-blowing headache I can’t get rid of, and I take Tylenol—if I came to you and said, “God healed my headache. It was a miracle”—you would hopefully say, “Let’s not use that word too loosely.”

How should we think about miracles, especially in relationship to our involvement with God’s work? Real miracles must be seen as God’s work, but we need to realize He works in a number of ways.

1. God works in mundane things. Mundane is not a pejorative word, implying things that aren’t important. Rather, it simply means common and ordinary events. For example, when the sun rose this morning, did any of you wake up and say, “Oh, my goodness. That’s amazing. God has done a miracle—it’s light!” Or as the people were leaving the first service, did someone say, “I can’t believe it. It’s November and there are little white flakes falling out of the sky”? Were the kids yelling, “It’s a miracle!”? No, that’s not a miracle. Or think about creation. When you walk into your postage-stamp of land you call your backyard, does it take your breath away? Probably not. He is supernaturally at work in giving light, in every breath we take, in the landscape around us. These are common things, but they are nonetheless God’s handiwork. Still, we would not call them miracles.

So when I gain relief from my headache, God is working through the ordinary, “mundane” means of doctors and medications. We’ve learned that there’s a problem with my equilibrium and that a couple aspirin will take care of it.

2. God works in the marvelous things. We move from the mundane works of God to His marvelous works. These are things that catch our attention. I don’t usually walk out on my patio and break into worship—“God, thank You for this amazing quarter acre of grass!” But when I stand on the precipice of the Grand Canyon, my response is quite different. “Whoa, that’s a big hole! God’s got a big shovel.” Or as I stand at the foothills of the Himalayan mountains and look five miles up at Mount Everest, I have a far different reaction than I do to my flat piece of ground in Hinckley. God created them both, but one is marvelous and the other is common.

Now, in the medical world, we will say that some surgeries are fairly mundane, like my knee surgery. But when Amanda and I walk into the hospital as two and leave as three, that’s pretty marvelous. I’m not sure it’s a miracle. I know you love your children and you want to think of each one as a miracle.

3. God works in miraculous things. A true miracle is when God supervenes in the ordinary course of life and does something truly out of the natural order. Having children is part of the order of human events. Yes, it’s marvelous and can take our breath away—especially for the mother—but it is not miraculous.

The miracles of God are two sides of the same coin. We have miracles that take place on an ongoing basis. We may hear of someone who’s suffering from a debilitating disease. The doctor has diagnosed their problem and may even have some marvelous technology or medicine to offer this person. Still, nothing works. The disease only worsens. As we watch our friend struggle, we rally together and pray.

The first element of a miracle is thus the “passive” miracle. It’s passive in the sense that our role is not an active one. Our elders have often obeyed the instructions given in James 5:14–15: *“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.”*

So our prayer in this case is, “Lord, if it be Your will, please heal our friend. Would You take away this disease?” We’re acknowledging that, in ourselves, we can do nothing. We don’t know if God will show up, but we’re agreeing that He can hear and answer prayer. Still, it’s God’s prerogative to decide how to respond to our prayer.

If you’ve been a Christian for some time, you no doubt have heard of people who have had tumors that chemo can’t touch, but prayer has resulted in the tumor disappearing. The doctor doesn’t understand how it could happen—that tumor was there and now it’s not. We’ve also heard of other debilitating struggles that people have had which were there one day and gone another. I would call those passive miracles, where God has done a work through the passive conduit of human prayer.

But this isn’t what’s happening in the book of Acts. In Acts, men became the active conduit for the miracles. Remember in Acts 3 when Peter and John were going to the temple and found a lame man sitting at the gate. Peter looked at the man, but he didn’t

pray, "Lord, if it be Your will, we ask You to heal this man who has been lame from birth." Instead, he told the man, "Get up and walk." Wait a minute. Shouldn't he have prayed first, to see if it was God's will? That's what we do. So clearly the way Peter, James and John did miracles was different from our way.

So we ask, does God still hear and answer prayers for miracles to take place today? Absolutely. Does God use people to actively heal others? I will say yes, with a caveat. I don't see in the New Testament outside of the apostles where a saint or a Christian had the gift to heal on demand. We know there were people in the New Testament who had the opportunity to heal, but couldn't.

Think about the story of Eutychus. Paul had preached so long into the night that this young man fell asleep during the sermon, fell out of a window and died. Paul, being more gracious than some pastors to people who fall asleep during sermons, raised Eutychus to life. But later in the New Testament, Paul's friend Timothy has a debilitating stomach issue, but in this case Paul tells him to drink some wine. We might wonder why Paul didn't just heal Timothy, or why he didn't heal his own "thorn in the flesh." I believe there was a season of time when God gave the apostles the ability to heal on demand to confirm the authority of their ministry. Does that mean those miracles don't happen today? The Bible never tells us that miracles have stopped. So be careful not to deny their possibility. They may not be as common today as we might wish. We also should realize that a lot of the miracles we see are on television, and this requires real discernment as to whether or not they are authentic.

So in summary, God is at work today in the mundane, in the marvelous and in the miraculous, both passively through us in prayer and actively through us when He wishes. But it doesn't make us healers who should draw crowds. God's desire is not that we should become famous, but that He would receive glory.

Here's how we should respond to these truths:

- First, we must be thankful for the mundane, and realize that God is at work even in things that are common.
- Second, we should allow His marvelous works to lead us into worship.
- Third, when we encounter issues that only God can address, we need to pray prayers of faith far more often than we do. We need to have bold faith.

When God gives us the opportunity to be the healing conduit for someone, we should do this humbly and in such a way that it points to the power of Jesus acting through us. So we see here that a lot of miracles were taking place in Acts to show the power of God.

The early church set people free.

Verse 16 says those who were "*afflicted with unclean spirits*" were healed. The church realized it was called to minister to people who were in bondage. That's our job as well today. We are not to hang around with people who are free and "put together." In Acts, those were the religious leaders who had it all figured out. But Jesus specifically went to seek and save those who were lost (Luke 19:10).

So our assignment is to seek out people who are in bondage, who are hurting and broken, and tell them that just as Jesus has set us free, so He frees them as well. He broke our chains of addiction and sin and oppression, those places where the devil had a foothold in our lives. We need to tell them they can experience that freedom as well.

All of these characteristics of the early church revealed that they were healthy, vibrant and carrying out the mission to which God had called them.

Heaven's Heroes have a mindset to persevere.

Our passage goes on to tell us, in verses 17 to 28, that the church needs to be on mission not only when things are good, but also when things are bad.

¹⁷ But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸ they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰ "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." ²¹ And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council and all the senate of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²² But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, ²³ "We found the prison

securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.”²⁴ Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to.

Notice that the captain of the temple and the chief priests were *“wondering what this would come to.”* It wasn’t so much that they were curious about how the men had been teleported out from behind locked doors. Rather, they were worried about what might happen to themselves.

²⁵ And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.”²⁶ Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them,²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”

As you see, the going got tough for the believers. They were serving God through ministry and healing, but now the opposition arrived. For them, and for us, there has to be a mindset of perseverance. Are we going to carry out our mission, not only when things are easy, but also when people begin to oppose us?

It says the believers in Acts were put in public prison. That meant they stripped them naked, put them in front of people and mocked them for the crimes they had committed. Are you on a mission for Jesus Christ to the degree that you could be put in the town square, stripped bare and mocked for your faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Are we ready for that kind of assignment?

That’s what happened to the early church. Still, after all that took place, we see their response down in verse 41: *“Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name [of Jesus].”* That’s the mindset we as Christians must have. When the going gets tough, we will rise to the occasion by the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work He’s called us to do. In order to do this, our thinking needs to change.

This involves remembering suffering will come.

In Luke 21, Jesus told His disciples that even as He was about to be persecuted, so they would be as well. He said that if they continued to teach the way He had taught them, the religious leaders would oppose them. He said, “They will put you in the synagogues and mock you. They’ll beat and threaten you. And you will have to choose whether or not you are willing to suffer for My sake.” The Christians in Acts 5 knew suffering was coming, but they proved to be equal to the task when it came.

This involves releasing personal comforts.

Their perseverance also meant they had to be ready to release some of their comforts. They were stripped and imprisoned. Their schedules were thrown off. Their friends and neighbors saw them differently. Even though God had an angel release them from prison, they were brought back into custody the next day, where they were beaten.

How many of us are willing to accept even a fraction of our comforts being taken from us for the cause of Jesus Christ? When we think about suffering in our day, do we think about something like going for an hour without Wi-Fi? They’re being stripped naked, imprisoned and beaten.

But what was their response? “That was awesome! We went through that for the name of Jesus. Jesus saw fit to use us, even if it meant we were beaten. Boy, my back really hurts, but man, I was able to stand for the God Who saved me.”

Can I just tell you that when I read this, I realize how very, very flabby we are spiritually in 21st-century America. We don’t even know what suffering is.

This involves respecting God’s choices.

God both rescues them from jail and allows them to be beaten. That means that when we are doing the right things—especially when we stand for our faith—God still permits pushback and even persecution in our lives. They were beaten and abused. God could have prevented that, but He did not.

Right now you may be in a workplace, in a family situation, where your faith is being beat up all the time. Your reaction might be to say, “God, get me out of here.” But God may have you in that situation precisely so you can suffer for Christ, even if you don’t understand why He’s doing that. The disciples in Acts rejoiced that God had allowed them to suffer. They didn’t try to get out of it or even try to explain it. They stayed because they respected God’s choices.

This involves recognizing God's control.

How could they respond this way? They recognized that God was in control.

I can imagine the Sadducees meeting together, stroking their big white beards as they pondered their own wisdom. Their designer robes emphasized their position. They were certain they were in charge. But in that moment they had no idea that the men they had arrested were no longer in prison, that an angel had taken them from jail and sent them back out to the temple—the very place where the Sadducees believed they were in charge. They even had the prison checked to assure them that the doors were still locked and guarded. But then the report came, “No one is inside!”

Did that bring to mind that not long ago a tomb was also found to be empty?

In this story in Acts, the Sadducees sent the officers to bring the men back carefully so the crowds would not get hostile or even stone them. After all, the people realized God was taking care of the apostles, which didn't give the religious leaders much credibility, in spite of their “cool beard” meetings.

You see, the whole time, while the leaders thought they were in charge, God was actually in control. We need to know that just as He was in control of their circumstances, He's also in control of ours. Not only did He control where the apostles were, He controlled where the unbelievers were as well—the men who were opposed to His people. He brought everything into place for one reason—to reveal the glory of Jesus.

Our concern should be to simply play our part. God is in control. If He brings suffering, we should praise Him. If He smoothes our path, we should praise Him. We can be assured that whoever opposes us is also within the hand of God. We will give God glory, because He is fully in charge of all things and man is not.

The situation in Acts 5 led to a response by a man named Gamaliel who was a highly esteemed Pharisee and had been Paul's teacher. Let's read this, beginning in verse 34:

³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸ So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice.

We should take Gamaliel's advice as well. If God is for us, who can be against us? Here was an opponent of the Christians who realized that if God was on their side, no one could do anything to stop them.

I want you to take that truth into your schools, workplaces and families tomorrow. If God is for us, nothing can stop us. But we don't believe that—and for that matter, neither did Gamaliel. Because if, as he said, the followers of Christ were to persevere, confirming they were of God, then he should have joined their number. But all he said was, “Get out of their way.”

If we truly believed that if God is for us, nothing can be against us (Romans 8:31), then when troubles come we would be more than conquerors in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37). This leads us to one final truth.

Heaven's Heroes have a message to proclaim.

We're going to be addressing this more extensively in a couple weeks when we look at Stephen's sermon, but we should notice that Luke is very passionate to continually communicate the gospel. This is a message that is proclaimed both in good times and in bad. It's preached when people want to listen and it's preached when they are opposing the preacher. Look at what Peter says, beginning in verse 29, even when he had been warned not to speak any longer of Jesus:

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

The gospel is consistent—not only through the book of Acts, but throughout the entirety of Scripture. It is based on these four points. If you've never heard the gospel, or never understood it, here is what it is:

1. The gospel puts God in His proper place.

God is God; you and I are not. We have a choice. Either we worship Him as God or we are rebelling against Him. Is God going to be number one in our lives or are we? We must put God in His proper place.

2. The gospel pronounces the guilt of sin.

We need to acknowledge our guilt. Peter tells the people, "You are guilty of putting Jesus on the cross." If Peter were standing before us today, he would tell us the same thing. We are guilty. Our sins are what put Christ on the cross. Our sins forced God to stretch His chastising hand against His only begotten Son, so that we might have redemption. Without Jesus, we are lost.

3. The gospel proclaims Jesus as Savior.

God raised Jesus up and brought Him to His right hand, exalting Him as Savior and Leader over all. The gospel has no other story than that of Jesus, God's Son, Who died on our behalf that you and I might have life.

4. The gospel points us in the right direction.

How do we gain this life? It is through repentance that we receive His forgiveness. Repentance means, "I am no longer going to live for myself, but I will live for King Jesus. I will see all my works as sin and all His works as glorious. I place my life at the foot of the cross. God, I need You. Save me from my sins."

Then God says to us, "This is the path you should follow." As we see over and over again in His Word, when we pursue the mission He gives us and persevere when the going gets tough, He will give us a message to proclaim. What's your mission? What's your mindset? And what's your message today? Hopefully we're Heaven's Heroes, following in the footsteps of the early church, because as we saw in their story, this will result in multitudes of men and women coming to know Christ.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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